

Exod 03-08-10a

Let's continue our worship this morning by taking a moment at the outset, at least at this outset of our biblical worship. Actually, that's not quite accurate either. All of our worship is biblical.

Before we study the Word of God together, we pause, as we should throughout our day. It's a difficult thing to develop a pattern or a habit of stopping in the ebb and flow of our circumstance and remember that our lives really accomplish nothing. They reflect nothing.

They produce nothing apart from the work of God's Spirit, apart from the influence of God's Word in our thinking. And many times, even as believers, we find ourselves in failure. We feel as though we were powerless against sin or against temptation.

We fell into something we should not have done, and we say, "I don't feel any different. I haven't acted any different than someone who is a part of the world and a part of the flesh and in league with the devil. I don't see where the power is."

Well, we tend to look back at the decision we made or at the course of action that we adopted, and we say, "Well, there is where I made my mistake. I should have thought and spoken and decided differently at that point." And we don't back up far enough, because the reason we didn't have power, the reason we didn't have insight, the reason we didn't have discernment and motivation to do something different than what we did is further back.

It's because we have not stopped and remembered who we are and why we're here. We are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not our own.

We have been purchased out of the slave market of sin, and we now serve a new Lord. Instead of being slaves to sin, we have been freed from that, and we are now servants of God, and not only servants, but children of God. And we have not only an obligation for service because we have been purchased, but we have an obligation for obedience and for loyalty and for love because we have been entered in, we have been adopted by God Himself.

He is our Father. The Lord Jesus Christ has claimed us for His own, has applied His work on our behalf before the Father, and we need to remember who we are. We need to remember why we breathe air and why we are alive on this earth.

It isn't just to cope with what comes up in the day. It isn't just to get by. It isn't just to grab a little happiness along the way, as the song says.

It is to make the minutes and the hours of our day count. Leverage, parlay, invest our time in such a way that it produces a benefit for God and for us in the eternal future. To do that, we have to stop and remember.

Go to the Lord. Take care of any sin that we have committed, whether it is known or unknown, whether it is recognized or unrecognized, and allow God's Holy Spirit to minister the Word to us. For Him to speak and to influence and to lead and guide, the Word of God has to be present in our souls.

That's why we assemble for fellowship in the study of God's Word, so that we know what the Word of God says. That knowledge is useless and powerless and can even lead to arrogance and to a supercilious attitude, a nose-in-the-air attitude. "Well, I know some things that people who don't study so closely don't know."

That knowledge doesn't benefit us unless it is available to the Holy Spirit as His sharp sword. You go to Ephesians 6, the armor of God: take in hand the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. It is the sword that divides asunder and exposes and lays bare the thoughts and intents of our heart, our motivations.

Why do we do what we do? That makes all the difference. Two people can do the identical same thing, live the identical same kind of life. One has leveraged this time into eternity and borne fruit as something that is going to reflect God's glory and create opportunities for service and function in the future.

And another of us has lived the same type of life but for very different reasons and will arrive with nothing but the thin white robe that marks us as saved and with nothing beyond. So, we say all of that and remind ourselves

of that so that as we approach God's throne in prayer, we recognize what it is we are here to do, both strategically and tactically this morning. We are here to reflect God's glory.

We are here to fulfill His plan and purpose in saving us, not only from the lake of fire, but saving us out of this present evil age. The only way we can live any differently from the rank, pagan, savage unbeliever is for God's power to be active. Many people talk about God's plan and God's purpose.

Many people talk about the characteristics that mark a biblical Christian. But where does the power come from to do it, to implement it, to make it happen, to really live differently because we are saved? It doesn't come from us. It's not our willpower.

It's not our decision to commit, although those are elements that claim God's grace. But the power comes from God's Spirit and God's Word. Shall we pray?

Father, thank you for looking down from Your throne, from Your heavenly dwelling in perfection and in righteousness and holiness, seeing us in our lost and hopeless and fallen condition and not reacting with repulse and with dismay and with outright judgment.

Instead, You offer us Your grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. You sent Him to live our life, to take on our flesh, to take on our burdens, to take on our sins, and to take on our judgment for our sins and our failures. And by uniting us with Him, You have given us eternal life, eternal salvation, and so many wonderful opportunities.

We know that we have no life apart from Him. We have no relationship with You except through Him. We thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit who enables and empowers and is the link between our earthly existence and Your heavenly presence.

We thank You that the Lord Jesus even now sits at Your right hand, interceding for us, making requests on our behalf, pleading His work in our interest. And we ask this morning that as we seek to understand Your Word and Your will, that the Spirit will find our hearts pliable and willing and a well-plowed field where that seed can be planted in such a way that it will bear fruit, not just 30- or 60-fold, but 100-fold.

And we ask that we will interpret and apply Your Word aright as we seek to have its power or be the influence that guides us through each day that lies ahead. We thank You for the country in which we live. We thank You for our President and for the godly men who serve in our judicial and legislative branches.

We pray Your blessing on them, that You will strengthen and encourage them even in the face of intense opposition. We sorrow and we confess our national sin when godly men are raised up and proposed for high office and are rejected and dismissed through pettiness and through self-interest and through political infighting.

We ask forgiveness on behalf of our nation, and we pray that You will not allow us to sink to the level of nations that have no mention of Your name in their halls of justice or on their coinage or in their Constitution or in any other area of their existence. We ask that You will continue to preserve us for the sake of the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal and that we will continue to enjoy freedom and opportunity to worship and to pursue our lives before You.

Once again, Father, we ask Your blessing on us. Bless our fellowship and our conversation. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We normally have our Scripture reading at this point, but we are going to be in a passage of Scripture that is connected to our study in Exodus chapter 14, and so I'm going to read it in connection with our study, and that will suffice for our substitute or stand-in, however you want to look at it. That's going to be our Scripture reading this morning.

But we need to introduce it and make way for it by immediately taking up the study of Exodus chapter 14. We find ourselves in the vicinity of verse 20. We left the Israelites on the brink of the newly created dry ground that bridges the shores of Yam Suph, the Sea of Reeds.

I mentioned to you last time that that is the correct name of the sea. However, liberal scholarship and faithless and degenerate minds have concluded that because its name was Yam Suph, Sea of Reeds, that it was sort of a shallow, marshy area that people could easily splash across and that there was some mild mitigation of the depth

from knee height to ankle height or perhaps even nearly dry ground, and the Israelites sort of walked without getting too wet or too muddy across this because there was some fluke of tide and wind, but that there was no great miracle here; that it could easily have been accomplished.

And even occasionally, there are cases where the combination of wind—usually it's a northwest wind, not an east wind—will combine with the tide schedule in that region in the days before the Suez Canal. Now, this is one of the reasons it's good to have some of the old commentaries, because you can go back to the days before there was a canal and find out what the prevailing conditions were that no longer apply, because you've got the Aswan Dam and you've got all the rest of the construction and modification that have gone on in that area.

But in the 1700s and in the early 1800s, before the construction of the Suez Canal, scholars noted that with a strong northwest wind and a confluence of tides—you know, there's such a thing as a neap tide—you have the regular tides and you have additional surges or mitigations of the tide depending on not only the position of the moon, but also when it lines up with the sun.

When you think about the situation you have with a solar eclipse, where you have the sun and the moon on the same side of the earth, that amplifies the gravitational effect and will create a higher tide than you would have when the moon is on one side and the sun is on the other.

Without resurrecting all of our past training in tides and navigation and so on, suffice it to say that under certain conditions they would see a great shallowness, and in certain areas of what used to be the Red Sea area, or the Yam Suph area in ancient times, all the way up until 100-odd years ago, there would be occasions where it would get very shallow and people could wade across knee-high or thigh-high in certain areas.

This is not what happens in Exodus chapter 14, because Moses stretched out his hand over the sea in verse 21, and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land so that the waters were divided. Now, it doesn't say the tides divided the water.

It doesn't say the wind divided the water, although that is an agency that God used. It says the Lord divided the waters. Now, you have a more literal translation.

I'll give you, for example, the translation Keil and Delitzsch, great classic Old Testament commentary from the 19th century. Jehovah made the water go or flow away by a strong east wind the whole night and made the sea into dry, and then ground is understood, made the sea dry is what it says, and the water split itself. You have the hippael or the reflexive idea here, i.e., it divided by flowing northward and southward, and the Israelites went in the midst of the sea where the water had been driven away by the wind in the dry.

It doesn't say in the soggy. It doesn't say in the muddy. It says in the dry.

If the Bible says dry, it was dry. There's only one kind of dry, right? Moist is not dry. Soggy is not dry.

Swampy is not dry. Up to the knees is not dry. I don't care if it used to be 50 feet deep and it has gone down to knee-high. That's not dry.

Dry is the absence of any form of liquid. It is dust time. You can have dust rise because there's no moisture in it. Dry.

And it dried quickly. We'll see why we know that here in just a moment. Notice as you continue in verse 22, the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea.

It says children of Israel, but this is B'nai Ha-Yisrael. B'nai is sons. Of course, it covers everyone.

But the children of Israel, the sons of Israel, went into the midst of the sea on the dry. And the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Now, what is a wall?

In most American dwellings, your standard wall is how high? Eight feet. In most ancient dwellings, your standard wall was six, seven, eight feet, just depending on how prosperous, how much by way of building materials they had. But when they reconstructed archaeologically, of course, people tended to be a little shorter in the Middle Ages, and you find some of those dwellings to be smaller.

But they built their houses much as we do today, in terms of wall height and door height. And when they say here that the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left, a wind might back up the tide in one direction. And you might have a wall, figuratively speaking, and you might be able to see the water over on one side.

This says there is a wall, and you get the idea these are equal walls, on the right hand and on the left. It is an east wind. The sea runs north-south, so the wind is blowing across, in their faces as it were, as they cross from the Egyptian side to the Canaanite side of the Red Sea. The wind is in their face, right?

Have you ever walked into a stiff wind? Have you ever tried running in a stiff wind? Requires a little more energy and effort, right? If this is a wind strong enough to drive the water one side and the other, this wasn't any sort of light, hair-ruffling breeze.

You could imagine that there is stuff that gets loose, tumbling away in this breeze. The men have to hang on to their head covering, their keffiyeh, or it would blow off and get stuck in the wheels of the Egyptian chariots. Anything that's loose is going to blow away.

If God sends a wind, it's not any little anemic, huff-and-puff, come-and-go breeze that would be calm a ship. This is going to be a nice, stiff wind in their face. They have to proceed against what seems to be a negative factor for travel and progress.

It's going to blow away anything that's loose. The blessing in the Navy is fair winds and following seas, and may the wind always be at your back, because that gives you an extra little impulse. Well, God did not put the wind at their back. He put the wind in their face.

Their delivering wind is in their face. And the waters are a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Anytime in the future, if you come across these books and articles that say, "Let me explain how God did the miracles. It was just a swamp and it was a shallow place," forget it.

The waters were a wall. The Ten Commandments movie got the picture real well. Wall of water on each side. They are below.

Plus, when God brings the waters back together here in a minute, are you going to drown 600 Egyptian chariots and horses and riders innumerable accompanying them in a swamp? What did they do? Fall down face first and just refuse to get up?

This has occasionally happened. You read stories about people who drown in four feet of water because they panic and they are trying to swim and they never just put their feet down and they glub-glub and down they go. Well, you can't get an entire Egyptian army to do that and just willingly submerge themselves in 18 inches of water.

It just is not plausible. This is a miracle. It is divine intervention.

It was a deep sea that was parted. This is the biggest act of deliverance that God will ever perform in the entire Old Testament. It is a picture of the deliverance that we experience at salvation.

Is God going to blow a little wind over a swamp to picture that? No. He took a nice deep sea. He put a big, stiff east wind on it, and He divided it into a wall on each side, a high wall.

They couldn't see over it. You don't see over a wall. They are down in the midst.

And the Egyptians pursued and went after them. It doesn't say into the area of the sea or looking over at the sea where it got blown. It says in the midst of the sea.

All Pharaoh's horses, all of his chariots, all of his horsemen. Now, how many Israelites left Egypt? We have a number of 600,000 men of fighting age. When you figure that most of them had families and children and so on, the estimate is, with the mixed multitude that accompanied them, something on the order of 2 million people.

That's the generally accepted size of this group, this host. So we think about the physical act of moving 2 million people through some sort of channel, some sort of passage that has been created in these waters. How much dry ground did God have to create?

Now, I think it was wider than what Cecil B. DeMille depicted, because if it's only wide enough for, say, even 30 or 40 people abreast to go through, you just start calculating how much space, add in the flocks and the carts and the herds and all the rest of the gear that they had with them. It's not like marching a formation of men who have got their rifles at the carry. There's a lot of gear and baggage and animals and so on to go with them.

So you've got 2 million people with all of their stuff to get across this sea. This is no minor little let-me-dry-out-a-path-through-the-swamp type of thing. It's a deep sea, and these waters are pushed back substantially.

The Bible does not say, but here's a conceivable, a plausible scenario. God pushes the waters back far enough so that you can get, let's say, somewhere between a half mile and a mile-wide passage. If you broaden a passage beyond half a mile, you could create a column that would be about a thousand people abreast, a thousand people across.

If you have a thousand across, how deep would that have to be? A little bit of math here for us English majors. You would have about 2,000 persons in depth. If you have 2,000 deep and a thousand across, a thousand times 2,000, if my math is correct, is 2 million, right?

Well, you have a column that is something more than half a mile in breadth and would extend something on the order of two miles, the average spacing, and that's just the people. You have to have a little more space for your flocks and your carts and things like that.

If you have a column of people that is a thousand wide and 2,000 deep, it can cross over its own length in about an hour. In other words, if you had a starting line on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea and you say, "Forward, march," and away they go, that column, a thousand wide, 2,000 deep, is going to take about an hour before the sandblowers in the rear are going to cross that line.

In the military, you put all your short people in the back and all your tall people in the front, so they call them sandblowers because all the dust that's been stirred up, these guys are trying to—and they have to take longer steps because the people in the front, your guide, they've got a nice long 34-inch inseam. People in the back have got a 28-inch inseam.

If you ever watch a military parade and you want to amuse yourself, look at the back and look at the little short guys who are just striding like double their normal stride so that they don't fall behind. At any rate, I don't know that they organize the Israelites by height, but calculations, just roughly speaking, if you figure a thousand across, 2,000 deep, they're going to cross their own length in something on the order of two hours or so to cross that two-mile length of their own column.

So, if you assume that, then the widest space that they could cross in the night would be something like three or four miles. You have to allow time not only for them to get across the starting line, but to get through the sea and get completely out, and some space before the Egyptians come in and get nearly across before God closes the water over the Egyptians.

So, throwing in your flocks and herds and things like that, you figure that they could have started something. We know that it was nighttime when it took place, after sundown. If they start at 9 o'clock in the evening, let's say, and even with the flocks and herds and carts and so on, this was a wide—you figure God probably opened up about a mile of the Red Sea, and they all got across.

They're going to be going slow with their carts and their animals and people trying to get the goats and sheep to move through that water and so on, but they could get across in a night. And so God divided it. They could have begun, let's say, at 9 o'clock in the evening, and let's say it lasted until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning.

The Egyptians are going to be following close on the heels of the last. That's what motivated the little short people to get on across and stride out. And God, of course, had moved the pillar of fire and put the angel of the Lord between the Israelites and the Egyptians so that they could not catch up, and there is a necessary gap.

So then it says in verse 24—actually 23—it says, "The Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen." So this also had to be wide enough that a military force comprising 600 chariots, various horsemen and foot soldiers and everything else can all be in the midst of the sea and far enough away from the shore that they do not escape by fleeing, right?

So this is going to be three to four miles across. I would suspect that the sea normally would have to be at least 18 feet deep to drown men beyond help with the turbulence of the water crashing back in and so on. It probably was not a swimming scenario, armor and so on that they had.

But you don't drown a military man in eight feet of water or 10 feet of water. I think it had to have been at least double that depth, just guessing. And three to four miles across and a mile wide.

You can imagine if you've got water backed up on both sides, half a mile from you on each side, let's say, and it comes rushing together, what is going to be the force and fury of that water? You've seen flash flood scenarios where it comes rushing down a canyon and people don't have time to flee and it obliterates everything in its path, and there's no such thing as swimming or floating on your back or something to survive that.

The force of the water takes care of any life that's in its path. This is interesting to me because when you think about the fire that was no doubt sort of near the base, you get the idea that it was near the base of the pillar and that the cloud goes up and the fire illuminates.

I thought about this. If you've ever seen a laptop computer, most of us have, I got a laptop that the screen did not light up anymore and you couldn't see what was going on. And I thought, well, this is given to me more or less for free.

And I thought, well, it would be great to fix this. The same thing happens in your dashboard lights and in illuminated clock faces and things like this. There is a light source in this laptop lid that goes across the top.

It's a fluorescent bulb, a little miniature fluorescent bulb, just like you see in the ceiling, but it's tiny. It's like a fat piece of spaghetti, basically, very delicate. And when that burns out, of course, you can't see an LCD display well at all.

So I did some research and sent off and got one through the mail and took the whole thing apart. And it was off by a few millimeters of the right size. I made some adjustments and did some creative carving and soldering and whatnot and managed to get it in there.

I broke the old one getting it out, but I didn't break the new one putting it in. And lo and behold, it worked. But how does it work? There is one light source here, but it shines all the way through and illuminates the screen, and you don't really see any unevenness in it.

And you can illuminate one end of something and it illuminates the entire column or the entire face. That's the idea. So the fire seems to be at the base of the cloud, illuminating the whole cloud at night.

God turned off the Egyptian half of that so that it was darkness and confusion to them and light to the Israelites. So now it says God, but it says God looked down. You know what that tells me? God is not in the fire.

If the fire is at the base, and we assume that it was, and the cloud is illuminated, but God is not the fire and God is not the cloud. That is the place where He dwells, but He's not the fire and He's not the cloud. He's in it.

It's fascinating when you go over to that passage where you have the prophet and there's a storm, but God was not in the storm, and there's all these other things, and then there's the still, small voice. It's interesting to compare to this.

At any rate, it says the Lord looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. He took off their chariot wheels, and this is kind of an understatement, so they drove them with difficulty.

You've seen Charlton Heston and the big Circus Maximus there where they've got the chariot race in Ben-Hur, and the guy with the little spoke dissolver on his chariot wheel going over there and digging away. When a

wheel comes off the chariot, you remember that's how the antihero dies there, the villain of the piece. His wheel finally comes off.

It gets locked and gets pulled off, and his chariot hits, and he goes flipping over. And you probably know that there was actually a stuntman killed in the filming of that scene, and his death is in the footage that's shown in the movie. The guy that you see tumbled under the wheels, that guy died in the making of it.

But for a wheel to come off when you're riding rapidly, and they drove them with difficulty—well, that's the understatement of the year. A one-wheeled chariot is not only difficult to drive, it is going to throw people and their weapons and everything else. It's going to impede the progress of other people around them.

It just wreaks unholy havoc all over the place. And once again, just as the parting of the water is miraculous, the taking off of the chariot wheels is miraculous. People have tried to argue, "Well, they got stuck in the muck after 2,000 people had gone over, it was all trodden down, and they couldn't ride through, and they got stuck in the mud."

No, God looked down, God took His finger and went, and off came the wheel. Off comes a wheel, and just chaos ensues. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel."

Why? The Lord fights for them against the Egyptians. Remember when Jesus was talking to His disciples, and He said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Now, if the Israelites had been on the far side, strutting and sticking their chest out and boasting and shooting out the lip and waving the finger at the Egyptians in the sea and saying, "Well, take that, you sorry Egyptian ne'er-do-wells," or whatever Hebrew language was strong enough to express their feelings, and got to strutting and boasting, this is nothing of Israel's strength.

It is nothing of Israel's power. They did well just to walk across the path that God provided for them. God is doing this. It is God's victory.

And when the Egyptians say, "Let us flee," they know that it's the God of Israel that has done this. It is a challenge for us to live our lives in such a way that when people look at them, they know that our victories are the Lord's victories.

When someone says, "Oh, what a good deal, what a wonderful circumstance, what a propitious life you are living, and how wonderful that things have worked out for you," and we say, "Well, we were fortunate to refinance when the interest rates were just at the right time," or, "Yes, we saw that that was going to be a good opportunity," we shroud and we deny the glory of the God who does all of our provision.

We've seen in our 1 Samuel study, He is our Father, He is our provider, He is our security. And we shame ourselves when God does great things for us, and it comes up in conversation, and we just talk in the ways of the world. "Yes, we were lucky. Oh, yes, that was really fortunate for us."

Instead of acknowledging, how is the light going to shine in our lives if we don't acknowledge the God who put the light in our life? How can men look at us and glorify God instead of looking at us and glorifying us and saying, "Well, he was sure smart. Boy, they really picked their timing well. Boy, he sure had a stroke of luck."

That luck is liable to be a stroke if we fail to acknowledge the God who brought it to us. The Egyptians, even as they die, know who it is that has wrought this deliverance and who it is that has wrought this victory. And what a shame that the Egyptians, in their last few minutes of life, have a greater appreciation for the God of Israel than these Israelites will just a day or two hence.

The Lord fights for them against the Egyptians. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians on their chariots and on their horsemen." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea.

And when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth. Eighteen inches, right? The sea returned to its full depth while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. And when it says the Egyptians were fleeing into it, you know what this means?

The sea closed back up kind of like a zipper. And it didn't start at the Israelite end. It started at the escape end. God brought the water back together on the Egyptian side.

The Egyptians were fleeing into it, the Bible says. Now, I think—and you correct me if I'm wrong—but I believe if you watch The Ten Commandments, the sea starts closing up on the Israelite side and overtakes them as they are fleeing. It comes up from behind.

And that would be—I love that scene. I take nothing away from that scene. But the Bible says they were fleeing into it.

It closed up on the west side, and that closing moved east just like a big zipper. Returned and covered the horsemen, the chariots, all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.

Nobody survived. Not one. There was no bedraggled little big man to go back and tell the story.

You know, Little Big Man, Dustin Hoffman, supposedly survives Little Bighorn and the Custer Massacre. There were no Egyptians to go back and tell the tale. Not one of them survived.

They are utterly and completely destroyed. This is a picture of our salvation. When God saves us, we are saved completely.

There is no power left that can drag us back into the darkness, back into the bondage, back into the slavery of Egypt. The pursuit that is mounted is totally and utterly extinguished and destroyed.

Well, what I find fascinating—and, of course, you could just camp here for weeks examining different elements of this deliverance—we are going to look at something that is not often noted. Look at the beginning of verse 21. What does Moses do?

He stretched out his hand, and the Lord caused the sea to go back. What does it say in verse 27? Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its full depth.

We are going to take a look at the stretching forth of the hand when we come back from our break because there are two things going on here. There is the total and complete deliverance by God for His people, and yet there is agency, there is authority, there is action on the part of God's people that invokes and is closely associated with God's deliverance and the implementation of God's power.

And the power is what this is all about. Who is more powerful, Egypt or God? Who is more powerful, God or sin? Well, it is a fascinating study, and that is what we will look at when we come back from our break.